

LECTURE: "Strategic Intelligence Estimate, USSR and Eastern Europe" delivered

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Introduction

When I was assigned this subject, I was generously given a lot of leeway. And I plan to use it. I'm going to do something very much like a law professor I once studied under said he did when he was taking examinations. He began by writing down everything he knew about the entire course. Then he divided this into a number of parts corresponding to the number of questions. Then he numbered each of these parts and handed in his paper. He hoped that the answers bore some relation to the questions but he was never sure. Well, I hope that what will be discussed this morning has some relation to the assigned topic - but I'm not sure.

The assigned subject is a pretty broad order. Therefore I hope you bear with me as I narrow it down somewhat. A strategic intelligence estimate of the USSR and Eastern Europe really boils down to what, in current intelligence lingo, we call Soviet capabilities and intentions. But in looking over the schedule

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of the preceding lectures, it appears that you gentlemen have already covered quite thoroughly those factors that deal with capabilities - the geographic, economic, and military conditions which go to make up the USSR's present power position. So today I won't go into these more tangible factors. I will merely ask you to bear them in mind while I indulge in some speculation - and it really isn't anything more than speculation - about what seem to be the important intangible factors, the factors which might throw some light on Kremlin intentions. In approaching the problem we may try to proceed in three stages, discussing first the way the boys on the Politburo apparently think (or at least the way we think they think); second, what they have done thus far; and third, what they are likely to do next.

Part I

On the question of how the Politburo thinks there are, of course, a number of factors that have to be considered - the cultural, historical, and geographic influences that would affect any Russian, whether Communist or Czarist; but there is not time to discuss all these factors here. The additional factor, quite possibly the most important factor, is Communist doctrine. I know it can be

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argued that today's Soviet rulers are completely cynical about this professed creed, and are merely a group of power-mad imperialists. Of course they are power-mad imperialists, but they are power-mad Communist imperialists. It seems to me impossible to draw a line between the influences of Communist dogma and the influences of personal and nationalistic ambition. Soviet leaders are of course personally ambitious, and they want to rule the world. But their training, education, and thinking have been along Communist lines. They therefore want to rule the world as Communists. They consider themselves the only true prophets of the Communist creed and they may believe, with deep sincerity, that the ultimate world-Communist state can only be achieved under their direction. They can no more escape the influence of Communist thought patterns than we can escape the influence of Western Christianity and parliamentary democracy.

So Communist ideology is important in trying to determine what the Kremlin is up to, and it is especially important because it purports to be both (a) infallible and (b) applicable to all human problems and situations. It offers an answer to everything. What can we learn, from an examination of Communist doctrine, that will help us answer today's 64 ruble question? - The question of

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that strategy and tactics the Soviets are likely to employ in their pursuit of the cold war and the question of when and under what circumstances Soviet leaders might seek or accept a hot war. First, let us take a look at some of the basic concepts in Marxist theory which are applicable to these questions. According to this theory:

All development is the result of struggle between opposites. (Conflict is normal. There is no such thing as peace and mutual tolerance.)

The ultimate goal of human progress is the ideal (Communist) society. (This, incidentally, is not bad, but a highly desirable condition to which no man could object. It is Utopia, the Millenium.)

Progress toward this goal is of necessity resisted by vested interests in the present (Capitalist) social order. (They can't help resisting).

Unfortunately, the exploited masses also cannot be made to see the light, blinded as they are by their upbringing.

The goal, therefore, can never be reached by persuasion and democratic processes. Force must be used to overcome the resistance of the capitalists and

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the inertia of the masses. Progress can be achieved only by violent revolution led by those who do see the vision.

A "revolutionary situation" is one in which (1) the masses are disillusioned and disaffected toward the regime; (2) the rulers are themselves disorganized and unable to operate their former controls; (3) a revolutionary minority is organized and ready to take over by force.

The Revolution having occurred in one country, that country (the USSR) must expect the undying enmity of the capitalist world. No accommodation is possible, except as a tactical maneuver to gain time.

That country (the USSR) must of necessity provide a secure base and strong support for revolution in other countries, and all Communists throughout the world must, in turn, serve and defend it. Its preservation is essential to the world revolution.

Capitalism bears the seeds of its own destruction and will inevitably succumb. Its last stages will be marked by increasingly severe depressions (e.g. 1929) and by imperialistic wars in which predatory states seek survival by prey-

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ing on others (e.g., 1939).

This will weaken the capitalist world and create "revolutionary situations" for Communist exploitation.

But throughout this period there will be grave danger that the capitalist world, perceiving the trend of events, may combine to attack and destroy the USSR in order to avert its fate.

Along with the development of Communist power, centered on the USSR, there will be a centralization of capitalist power, based in the US. This polarization of power between the Soviet led Communist world and the US led capitalist world will be a prelude to the final decisive showdown for world domination.

Now if Soviet leaders actually believe in the foregoing principles, what kind of world policy would they be likely to pursue? It seems to me that such a policy would be divided into two general categories, defensive and offensive. The defensive phase of this policy would be designed to preserve, protect, and strengthen the base of Communism - the Communist bridgehead on the earth's surface - the USSR itself. The USSR is regarded by all "good" Communists as *the* temple of Communistic faith, the citadel of Communist strength and base for

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future Communist expansion into other areas. The USSR must, therefore, be guarded at all costs and no venture or maneuver abroad may be allowed to jeopardize its security.

The ~~offensive~~ phase of such a hypothetical world strategy would be directed toward dividing, weakening, and eventually destroying the capitalist world. But remember, that according to Communist dogma the disintegration of the capitalist world is sure to come sooner or later anyway. The Communists should try to accelerate this disintegration, but time is on their side and they need not undertake great risk or excessive expense in promoting it. When faced with strong opposition, they can, as Lenin directed, afford to take "one step backward" and ^{hide} ~~lay~~ their time until conditions change and permit them to take the "two steps forward". If this discussion has been on the right track thus far, then it seems Soviet strategy should, under present conditions, operate under four priorities. The first priority would be the protection and strengthening of the Soviet Union. The second would be the maintenance and consolidation of Communist control throughout the Satellites. The third priority would be to weaken, divide, and eventually gain control of peripheral countries and areas in Europe, the

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Near East and Asia and, finally, gain control of the rest of the world.

Part II

So much for the apparent theory of Soviet world strategy, as reflected in Communist doctrine. On the basis of the record thus far, has this theory actually been observed in practice? I think in most respects it has. It seems a safe generalization to say that the Kremlin has never let any consideration under priority 2 seriously interfere with priority 1, or any consideration under priority 3 interfere with either 1 or 2.

As perhaps the most convincing example of this, recall the situation in Europe at the end of World War II. The USSR then enjoyed, among the peoples of Western Europe, a degree of good will and prestige that has never ^{been} approached before or since. Likewise, the European Communist Parties were riding the crest of the wave. Furthermore, the unsettled conditions of post-war Europe were made-to-order for Communist exploitation. It should have been fairly easy for the Communists, by peaceful methods, and with subtle support from the Kremlin, to gain power through the old "popular front" technique.

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But what happened? Spreading Communism into Western Europe belonged under priority 3. The Kremlin had two missions of higher priority: First, to "tighten up" in the USSR itself - to seal off all the contacts with the West that had been necessitated by the war - to bolster up the ideological defenses of the homeland; and second, to consolidate its position in the Satellites, and in the Soviet Zones of Germany and Austria.

In pursuing these first two priorities, the USSR soon destroyed its chances of winning its third priority. In the USSR itself, the obvious hostility of Soviet domestic propaganda raised, among Western observers, serious alarm. The slow progress of Soviet demobilization created distrust. Intensified security measures created doubts as to what the Kremlin was up to.

In the Satellites, the ruthless methods used in establishing, and maintaining Communist governments attracted world-wide attention. So did Soviet tactics in the Eastern Zones of Germany and Austria.

As a result, all the good will enjoyed by the USSR and by the native Communist parties in Western Europe was soon fritted away. It was replaced by an anti-Communist solidarity which would have been hard to imagine only a few years ago.

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Take another example - Greece: The Soviets certainly had, during the early stages of the civil war in Greece, the capability of direct military intervention which would have gained a prompt decision in their favor. Certainly at the outset such intervention would probably not have precipitated a global war, but this - the expansion of Communism outside the existing Soviet Orbit - belongs under priority 2. It might have precipitated a global war and, therefore, might have interfered with priority 1 - the protection of the USSR proper. Therefore, it was never undertaken.

Another example of this principle is the Soviet retreat from Iran in the face of Western pressure in 1946. At that time, it would have been fairly safe for the USSR to move to the Persian Gulf. I doubt if the Western powers would have gone to war under those conditions, but there was some risk, some danger to the security of the Soviet Union in the remote possibility of a strong Western reaction. Therefore, the USSR turned tail and ran.

Then there is the example of Yugoslavia. The USSR, I believe your military gentlemen will agree, certainly had the military capability of settling the Tito

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problem in short order, but it has refrained from using this capability. At the time of Tito's first disaffection, it seems to me that Soviet military action would have run very little risk of provoking Western intervention. But at least there was the possibility that it might provoke such intervention. Thus, even a very serious threat under priority 2 - the consolidation of Soviet control over one of the most important of the satellites - was not permitted to interfere with priority 1. Incidentally, I think in this connection there may have been another reason for Soviet restraint from direct action against Tito. Aside from the remote risk of Western intervention there was the danger that direct Soviet action might do serious damage to the Kremlin's ideological integrity. Communist doctrine contains no provision for dealing with dissident nationalism within a Communist family of nations. Any military action against Tito would have done serious violence to the ideological fig leaf, which, in the words of Mr. George Kennan, is heavily relied upon to clothe the nakedness of Soviet imperialism. To resort to military force against Tito and thus admit that Communist ideology was unequal to the task of preserving the solidarity of the Communist world might have caused deep and lasting cleavages throughout the

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Soviet Orbit.

A further illustration of this same principle, it seems to me, can be found in Soviet policy in Germany. (Viewing, for this purpose, Eastern Germany as a Satellite and Western Germany as a part of Western Europe). The Kremlin has consistently placed the consolidation of its control in Eastern Germany higher on its priority list than the penetration and annexation of Western Germany. There have been a number of occasions when some concessions, some relaxation in the Soviet control of the Eastern Zone of Germany would have greatly improved the USSR's chances of gaining eventual control of the entire country. And yet the Kremlin has been so determined and heavy-handed in railing down its control of the Soviet Zone of Germany that it has driven the Western Zones farther into the Western community of nations.

Part III

Thus far, then, at least up until the Korean venture, Soviet strategy has followed pretty closely Communist theory. We have had a fairly consistent pattern of what Lenin called "the unity of theory and practice". But have the

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events regarding Korea altered this pattern? They have certainly required us to take another look. And many people think they mark a definite new phase in Soviet strategy. A lot of very well informed specialists feel that the North Korean attack, and the later intervention of the Chinese, prove that the Kremlin is now prepared to accept such greater risk of war in pursuit of its aims than heretofore.

While that may well be true, it seems doubtful to me that the events in Korea alone prove it. In the first place, I doubt if the Kremlin expected the US and the UN to react so vigorously. In the second place, even after we did, the intervention of the Chinese "volunteers" doesn't seem to have greatly increased the danger of the USSR becoming unintentionally involved. The Kremlin hardly expects us to drop a bomb on Moscow without warning. If they get such a warning, that will be the time when they back down and call off the dogs. There seems to be no good reason for them to back down yet. There is of course the possibility that China may become involved in a major war. But that wouldn't necessarily involve the USSR. Moscow may figure that if the US is in a mood

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to get in a big fight, the thing to do is to let us have it with China - the Kremlin may be using China to bait us, to see how far we can be pushed. If we strike back, the Kremlin may expect us to strike back only at China. While that might upset the Chinese regime, it would be far less costly to the Kremlin than for us to attack the USSR, and China might serve to divert our energies from the more important areas of Europe and blunt our offensive capabilities against the USSR. China may be designed to serve as a tar baby in which we will get stuck, giving the USSR a free hand elsewhere. If so, there is still the question of why the Chinese have fallen for this. Maybe they have actually become convinced by Soviet propaganda and pressure, by Soviet-planted intelligence, etc., that we are about to invade Manchuria or bomb Chinese targets. Anyway, it is my personal opinion that Korea alone doesn't prove that the USSR is ready to accept a serious risk of general war.

Although events in Korea, taken by themselves, don't necessarily prove that the USSR is ready to accept general war, there are a number of other reasons for considering such a Soviet move within the next couple of years, a very definite possibility. While it is by no means infallible, I have my own "rule

of thumb" - definition of when the Kremlin may jump off. (Incidentally, I would like to remind all of you that what is being said here is not necessarily official CIA thinking. Many of the ideas here are, of course, shared ^{by} with a lot of other people in CIA and many of them are ^{no} by ~~any~~ means original with me. But I just want to make sure that this is not considered an official CIA estimate). But the definition of when the USSR is likely to resort to general war might be stated as follows:

"The USSR will probably resort to general war only when Soviet leaders estimate that their power position and their state of war readiness are sufficient to ensure a good chance of success. Even then Soviet leaders will not be likely to deliberately resort to general war unless either they have become convinced that their aims can probably no longer be attained by means short of war, or that an attack on the Soviet Orbit by the Western Powers is probable."

In applying these three conditions to the present world situation, we first have the question of how the Kremlin estimates its chances of success in a general war fought under present conditions. Time doesn't permit us to get into any

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detailed discussion of present Soviet capabilities as compared with those of the West. Certainly the Soviet Orbit now has achieved a very high state of war readiness. But I personally doubt if the Kremlin believes that the Soviet Orbit has yet developed the necessary strategic industrial base to support a long war. Furthermore, I doubt if they believe they have sufficient atomic capabilities or sufficient defenses against atomic attack to challenge the US at present. Soviet leaders apparently have deep respect for the industrial potential of the Western world in general and the US in particular, and they probably don't want to challenge the West until they have considerably broadened and improved their industrial base. The Kremlin would, therefore, want for several years to come to avoid war while it improves its industrial ^{potential} targets. It would particularly like to get Western Europe and especially Western Germany, adding these resources to the Soviet Orbit and denying them to the West. It would also like to get as much as possible of the other areas of Eurasia, including Northern Europe, the Turkish straits ^{area}, the Persian Gulf, and Southeast Asia. ^{only} After it has gotten most of these do I believe it will feel sufficiently confident of its overall strategic position to provoke the final show-

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down in the form of an intercontinental war with the US. Until then Soviet leaders will hardly want to risk the fruits of their life's work - the citadels of Communist strength, the temples of Communist faith and their own personal safety - ^(an uncertain) ~~is a risky gamble.~~

The next question is whether Soviet leaders have lost confidence in their ability to achieve their aims by means short of war. At the moment they appear checked in Europe and the Near East. But there is no reason for them to give up entirely. In fact, just recently we in this country have had a very rude awakening because of the difficulties of developing an effective European barrier to Soviet aggression. The Kremlin is certainly keenly aware of these difficulties and is doing everything it can to aggravate them. It is having some initial successes. While there is no doubt that the USSR foresees the NATO, and especially the rearmament program of Germany, as an obstacle to ^{westward} ~~Western~~ Communist expansion and possibly even as a threat to the Soviet Orbit, the realization of the objectives of NATO are still a long way off. In the mean time there are a lot of things that the Kremlin can do to undermine it, many of them they are already

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doing. They can create doubt, fear, and division among the Western Powers.

They can appeal to Germans in the name of German unity and they can intimidate the Germans by warning them of the consequences of their participation. They can, I am afraid, take considerable comfort from the signs of political disunity here in the US. Moreover, there are soft spots in the Middle East and tempting targets in Southeast Asia. In terms of long-range war strategy, therefore, the Politburo probably sees no reason to abandon hope of future success by means short of war.

Finally, does the Kremlin actually fear an attack by the Western Powers? Judging from Soviet propaganda the answer would certainly seem to be yes. However, Soviet leaders have in the past demonstrated a pretty skillful ability to reduce international tension by a few kind words and token concessions. And the Politburo, at least, must realize the difficulties that leaders in the democratic nations would have in preparing and launching an aggressive war even if they want to. The only reason we are mobilizing at all is because of Soviet provocations, and the better informed observers in Moscow surely must realize that by even temporarily abstaining from these provocations they might undermine

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our entire mobilization program.

If what I have said makes any sense, and if Soviet leaders are not planning or expecting general war in the near future, then why are they devoting such efforts to the development of Soviet military capabilities. There may be several explanations:

- a. First to ensure the protection of the Soviet Orbit against even the remote possibility of aggression from abroad.
- b. To support, perhaps covertly, Communist revolutionary or military operations in peripheral areas and at the same time discourage the Western Powers from intervening in defense of ^{existing} ~~resisting~~ regimes in the peripheral areas.
- c. To serve "as a big stick" to back up the threats of Soviet propaganda and diplomacy.
- d. To intimidate and discourage the nations tempted to align themselves with the US.
- e. To increase the appeal of the Soviet sponsored "peace" campaign, by making the threat of war appear serious.

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- f. To ensure continued domination of the Satellites whose military capabilities are being rapidly developed.

Does all of this mean that the threat of war in the near future - within the next couple of years - is not very serious? Definitely it is serious. While the foregoing theories appear logical in the light of Communist doctrine and the recent history of Soviet foreign policy, they are only theories. On the other side of the ledger we have some other theories and some concrete facts, several of which are quite ominous.

- a. The USSR is now faced with the possibility of an effective NATO organization and of the rearmament and participation in NATO of Western Germany. While probably not the sole factor in a decision to resort to general war, the rearmament of Germany might well be the decisive factor. The Kremlin might figure that a rearmed Germany, particularly in the NATO program, would constitute an intolerable obstacle to future Soviet success in Europe and perhaps even a threat to the Soviet Orbit. While ~~German rearmament~~ ^{Germany rearmament} and a successful NATO are still far from certain, if

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and when the Kremlin figures it can prevent these developments only by resorting to war, it will be strongly tempted to do so. While both of these developments are still some distance away, the Kremlin probably would not wait until they had become a reality before deciding to strike.

At any time that Soviet leaders think that NATO and German rearmament cannot be prevented by means short of war, the USSR might attack.

- b. The Kremlin might estimate that at present it could overrun Europe and parts of the Far East and Asia and that the USSR could survive a retaliatory US atomic attack, but that ~~if~~ in a few years, no matter how much Soviet offensive and defensive capabilities might be improved in the meantime, the US would be able to deliver a real knockout/blow at the USSR. The Kremlin might, therefore, decide to strike now, hoping to survive our retaliation and then leaving us in the position of having used our atomic capabilities without complete success, faced with the choice of negotiating a settlement that would recognize Soviet domination throughout Eurasia or of entering into a long, burdensome, and perhaps inconclusive armament race with the USSR in preparation for the

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final showdown.

- c. Throughout the Soviet Orbit there has recently been a vigorous effort rapidly to improve the war readiness of the USSR and the Satellites. Internal security machinery ^{has} ~~have~~ been highly developed; psychological preparations for war have been extensive; strategic items have been stockpiled, especially in forward areas; combat aircraft production has been standardized; Satellite military forces, especially in South-east Europe, have been expanded and equipped with modern weapons; and the Soviet atomic program is moving ahead on a high priority.
- d. Whatever reading of Soviet propaganda and Communist dogma may indicate about the thinking of Soviet leaders, we have to face the fact that none of us can speak with any assurance on this point. The men in the Kremlin are probably the most isolated individuals in the world (with possible exception of some of their own prisoners who are being "reeducated" in the camps of Siberia). We have no way of knowing how the Politburo judges or misjudges the capabilities and intentions of the US and of other free nations. We don't know what information or misinformation they receive about the outside world and we don't know to what extent

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they may be deluding themselves about their own capabilities.

From all of this discussion I am afraid I haven't lost you gentlemen with my very satisfactory answer to the question that we are all concerned with. It seems that about all we can safely say is that we can't very safely say anything. My own belief is that a deliberate Soviet resort to general war within the next couple of years does not yet constitute a probability, but certainly a very strong possibility. And there is an equally strong possibility that because of their isolation and their possible tendencies to misjudge the West and delude themselves, Soviet leaders might stumble into war through miscalculation. And then, of course, there is the continuing possibility - I think we can call it a probability - that the Kremlin will use its satellites for limited aggression whenever and wherever the chances of success appear favorable, and the risk of thereby provoking a general war appears slight. As I mentioned earlier, the Kremlin seems intent upon gaining as much of the area and resources of Eurasia as possible without getting the USSR involved in any war with the West. Military action by the satellites is one way of doing this. The pattern has been already established by North Korean forces and Chinese "volunteers"

in Korea, and by covert help to Communist forces in Southeast Asia. This pattern may be repeated in ^{one} this way or another against such targets as Yugoslavia, Greece, and perhaps even Western Germany.

As you have seen, the question is hard to answer and we can't get the answer from the information which we now have. While we may never get the final answer my own feeling is that we can get a much better answer than we now have if we can concentrate ^{all} on the resources at our disposal on collecting and analyzing the various little bits and pieces of factual information out of which the final answer has to come. The answer is not going to come from the works of Marx, Lenin or Stalin, as important as they are. If we get it, it is more likely to come from accurate factual data about what is going on in the oil refineries at Baku, in the tank plants in the Urals, in the railroad yards at Brest-Litovsk, in the harbor at Turmanak, and on the air fields on the Chukotka peninsula. Many of you gentlemen are going to be working to get just this kind of information, and this is the kind of information that we are going to have to rely on.